~~50~~
20¢

We are committed to peace on earth and in space

Interview granted by Erich Honecker,
General Secretary of the Central Committee
of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany
and Chairman of the GDR Council of State,
to the West German weekly *Die Zeit*

Erich Honecker grants an interview to the West German weekly *Die Zeit*

The General Secretary of the SED Central Committee and Chairman of the GDR Council of State, Erich Honecker, has granted an interview to the West German weekly ***Die Zeit****, in which he answered numerous questions on the international situation as well as the GDR's domestic and foreign policies. The interview published on 31 January 1986 under the title "Living with Each Other and Doing so in Harmony", reads as follows.*

ZEIT: Of what significance is the meeting between the Soviet General Secretary and the US President to the two German states?

HONECKER: The Geneva summit and its outcome, which we welcomed as encouraging and positive, are of great significance for the entire human race. They have created favourable conditions for settling the most important issue, namely preventing a nuclear catastrophe, ending the arms race on earth and preventing it spilling over into space. It is this which will decide whether Europe, the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany, have a future in peace. Nobody stands to lose, everybody stands to gain. Initial steps towards disarmament in accordance with the outcome of the Geneva summit would be suited to halt the continued stockpiling of weapons on German soil, to create more security, to make peace with ever fewer weapons.

You will be aware, Mr Sommer, that Mikhail Gorbachev has put forward a comprehensive programme to rid the world of nuclear weapons by the year 2000. The GDR has expressed its unqualified support. We regard this programme as a historic opportunity. What is impressive about it is not only the boldness of vision but also the fact, that given an appropriate approach on both sides, it is indeed practicable. For anyone who seriously wants

peace the idea of a world without nuclear weapons can only strengthen them in their determination to do everything they can to help ensure that this magnificent prospect becomes a reality.

In the shape of this recently submitted programme, which could be called, not without reason, the programme of the century, the Soviet Union has once again declared its firm intention to make headway on the issue of safeguarding peace. I am convinced that this programme announced at the start of the UN International Year of Peace offers the possibility of making each and everyone of the coming years years of peace. This would release enormous resources for mankind and human advance. The nations of the world really would be able to breathe a sigh of relief.

The Geneva summit has generated major impetus for improving the international situation as a whole. Now the outcome of this meeting has to be put to good use. All states, governments, parties and social forces are called upon to help pave the way towards nuclear disarmament. A multitude of opportunities are open to the two German states to live up to their responsibility for the preservation of peace and to help create for their peoples and indeed the whole of mankind the prospect of security.

ZEIT: The German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany are strongly integrated in different alliances. However, due to their position on either side of the dividing line between the two social systems and military coalitions, they have both a special responsibility to bear and a specific interest. How would you define this responsibility, this interest?

HONECKER: A special responsibility, which today is greater than ever before does indeed arise from the position of the two German states on either side of the sensitive dividing line between the Warsaw Treaty countries and NATO. History alone provides enough evidence for this. The two most horrible wars in the history of the human race emanated from German soil. A Third World War, a nuclear inferno, would be tantamount to mankind's self-annihilation.

Nowhere else in the world are lethal weapons to be found in such a concentration as in central Europe. The consequence for the two German states is that each type of military confrontation, no matter whether it involves conventional or nuclear weapons, would bring disaster. Therefore, the GDR and the FRG can and must consider it a matter of top priority to doing every-

thing worth in their power for the strengthening of peace, for disarmament and detente as well as for stability in this part of the globe.

The German Democratic Republic is prepared to take up this challenge. While developing relations with the Federal Republic we are bearing in mind that the relationship between the two German states must not cause additional strain on the situation in Europe but rather help to create conditions which will allow the states and peoples on our continent to live together peacefully.

This is all the more urgent because the Star Wars programme of the United States threatens the militarization of outer space, at the same time pushing the peoples of the world to the brink of a nuclear catastrophe. Outer space must not become a gateway to hell. We are in favour of peace on Earth and in outer space.

ZEIT: How much room to manoeuvre do the GDR and the Federal Republic have within their respective alliances to live up to their special German-German responsibility? Has this increased since the Geneva summit? Is it, on both sides, limited by still lingering historical recollections, not least amongst smaller neighbouring states?

HONECKER: If you start talking about room to manoeuvre, I would like to say that our's is unlimited. You may always take it for granted that our policy, the policy of the GDR, is geared towards making peace more secure through arms limitation and disarmament. As far as the GDR is concerned I can state quite firmly that no war shall again emanate from German soil, from the territory of the GDR. We regard the preservation of peace as the most important of all tasks and undertake in this respect various activities at the international level, and all the more since the Geneva summit. This is borne out, among other things, by the meeting of the leading representatives of the Warsaw Treaty member states in Prague on 21 November 1985.

We consider the dialogue with leading politicians of non-aligned and western states hemisphere, and not least of the NATO countries, as a means of promoting trust and accountability in international relations, and stabilizing peace and security. You will have realized that we tackle things with common sense and realism and are prepared to make compromises wherever they are conducive to the improvement of the international situation. This is in full accord with the interests of the GDR and the peaceful aspirations of its citizens, of our neighbours and friends.

ZEIT: Since it took office in October 1982, the Kohl government has been exercising a pragmatic continuity in Federal Germany's *Ostpolitik*. Would you agree with this or would you say that Bonn has been pursuing a different *Deutschland-* and *Ostpolitik* since the new coalition took power? Do you have the impression that Bonn is starting to dissociate itself from the joint declaration made by you and the Federal Chancellor in Moscow on 12 March 1985?

HONECKER: Indeed, after the change of government in 1982 the Federal Government under Chancellor Kohl declared continuity in its *Ostpolitik* in keeping with the valid European system of treaties. We have noted this with interest and, as you know, responded positively to it. It is in this sense that we attach great importance to the Joint Declaration agreed upon by Federal Chancellor Kohl and myself in Moscow on 12 March 1985. It confirmed that the inviolability of the existing borders and the respect for the territorial integrity and souvereignty of all states in Europe within their present borders are a fundamental precondition for the preservation of peace. Clearly, Federal Chancellor Kohl seems to be standing by this declaration, and we welcome this. In this connection I would like to stress that we have given a positive response to Federal President von Weizsäckers' recent declaration made on the occasion of the New Year's reception in Bonn, in which he spoke of the inviolability of borders and the respect for the territorial integrity of all European states.

However, we are not so naive as to fail to notice the dangerous ventures of those circles who have learned nothing from history and who are not fond of the form this development is taking. This, in turn, gives rise to a number of contradictions. To engage in Pan-German rhetoric and to abandon oneself to revanchist aspirations not only means a strain on our relations but may also bring about quite the opposite of what we are striving for.

ZEIT: You have said repeatedly that a return to the Cold War would be of no use to anyone. Instead, you have declared yourself to be in favour of an extension of German-German relations. What form would this take? Which projects do you have in mind for further cooperation?

HONECKER: If both sides let themselves be guided by a sense of realism and good will as well as by the respect for sovereignty and non-interference

which, in fact, should be a matter of course, then progress will be made in our relations. We attach particular importance to the extension of political relations. Why, for example, should it not be possible for the Foreign Ministers of both states to meet in the FRG or in the GDR in order to talk about matters of security? Actually, it is uncommon for two neighbouring states such as the GDR and the FRG to meet for talks only at the UN General Assembly in New York or in Madrid, Stockholm and Helsinki.

Anyhow, we hold the view that there are still many opportunities for developing political relations in such a way as to help create a stable zone in the heart of Europe and reduce the risk of a nuclear catastrophe. Opportunities for the extension of relations exist in the spheres of environmental protection, culture, transport and communications and the economy, to mention but a few examples.

ZEIT: What is your opinion about prospects for future cooperation in the spheres of culture, science and technology as well as environmental protection? Which concrete problems could be tackled on the basis of an Environmental Protection Agreement?

HONECKER: Some time ago the text of an agreement on bilateral cultural cooperation was negotiated between the GDR and the FRG. I am convinced that this will be an important step towards normalizing relations and will be conducive to cultural exchange. By the way, concrete ideas on this for the next two years already exist.

As regards science and technology, negotiations are under way. An agreement is possible. An Environmental Protection Agreement which at present is the subject of talks with the Federal Government could make an effective contribution to environmental management and environmental protection as well as to the rational utilization and the protection of both states' natural resources. Doubtless this includes the exchange of experience and technological solutions for keeping the air and water clean and for preserving and maintaining our forests, to mention but a few aspects.

ZEIT: Apart from general cooperation we are particularly interested in cooperation to purify the Werra and Weser as well as the Elbe river. Are there any plans ahead?

HONECKER: Negotiations are under way concerning the Werra and the

Weser rivers and we can assume that these talks will be completed almost irrespective of the fact whether agreement can be reached about the definition of the borderline on the Elbe. There have also been contacts with regard to keeping the Elbe river clean. Naturally, it is very important to determine the borderline on the Elbe. This would make things a lot easier.

ZEIT: Is environmental protection as important to your citizens as it is for the citizens in the Federal Republic?

HONECKER: It is, indeed, just as important to us. We have been active in this area of environmental protection for some time now. We have taken specific measures to remove pollutants and to try in general to gain better control over this problem in cooperation with the population.

However, the term "dying forests" is not applicable over here. This week I again referred to the map designed by the Minister of Environmental Protection and know that we have great damage in forests in the Fichtelberg region and throughout the area bordering on the CSSR. Agreements have been concluded between the GDR and CSSR to lay the foundations for reafforestation so that healthy trees again can grow there. But otherwise we can say that our forests are healthy.

Things are also a little different with regard to "acid rain". Together with Sweden's Prime Minister, Olof Palme, I undertook the long journey to Stralsund. We came across large strips of woodland and he asked me: "What about acid rain here?" I replied: "I'm sorry, Mr Prime Minister, we have no experiences whatsoever of acid rain."

ZEIT: Scientists believe that air pollution is partly due to two-stroke engines. When will we see the first Trabant with a VW engine, irrespective of whether the VW engine is healthier for forests or not?

HONECKER: Some claim this, others not. The VW engine will probably be introduced in 1988. I have to tell you, however, that there are quite a number of fans of the Trabant and Wartburg two-stroke engine. These cars are rather popular. Not everybody has a garage and you can park the thing wherever you like without bothering about it too much in winter. There is sure to be a big discussion on this.

ZEIT: In the future whenever the practical question of including West Berlin in contractual agreements arises, how can troublesome arguments about interpretation be avoided?

HONECKER: First of all, I should like to draw to your attention the Quadripartite Agreement of 3 September 1971 which offers a solution in keeping with the interests of all parties concerned. Disputes on matters of interpretation with regard to the practical inclusion of West Berlin can be avoided if one's acts are measured against the spirit and letter of the agreement. We are in favour of this agreement being strictly adhered to and applied in full. The main point is that West Berlin is not part of the FRG and should not be governed by it.

ZEIT: Does this also apply to the cultural exchange?

HONECKER: The question of the inclusion of West Berlin into the cultural agreement, heatedly debated in your country, is of no interest to us since West Berlin, in line with the Quadripartite Agreement of 3 September 1971, will be included in all stipulations.

ZEIT: Included on the basis of that Agreement?

HONECKER: The Agreement has such a clause so there is no problem.

ZEIT: There was a lot of scepticism voiced in Westberlin when negotiations on the cultural agreement began.

HONECKER: Yes, there were some reservations. There are good reasons to be happy once it is finished.

ZEIT: Up to now many more young West Germans have travelled to the GDR than young people from the GDR to the Federal Republic. What is required to change this?

HONECKER: I cannot find anything abnormal in the fact that a greater number of young people travels from the FRG to the GDR than vice versa. This is due, to begin with, to the different sizes of the population. In addition, there are a number of commercial reasons for the present ratio due to the differ-

ent price levels in the GDR and the FRG. Due to the low prices in the GDR –just think of the low cost of food and travel–the financial expenditure for one trip to the FRG would allow for several trips to the GDR. Such things must also be taken into consideration.

On the whole, however, I have to stress that tourism among young people is developing well. Now full use should be made of the possibilities outlined in the existing agreements between the youth organizations in both German states. I hoped, that this would go smoothly.

ZEIT: What can be done in the time ahead to make living together easier for the people in both German states? Do you think it possible that West German cities, such as Hamburg, situated close to the border, be included into the agreement laying down regular border traffic? Or that your authorities might permit more people to visit their relatives in the West on urgent family matters? Or that souvereign decision be taken to allow GDR citizens to travel to the West at a younger age? Or that those who took up residence in the Federal Republic for good and have given up their GDR citizenship may travel to the GDR just like everyone else and not be barred from visiting their old home as is often the case?

HONECKER: You know, one can think of many things that are possible. Yet one should keep both feet firmly on the ground. Traffic between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany is not as minimal as is often claimed in some Western media. Indeed, it is quite considerable. Every year about six to eight million citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany travel to the German Democratic Republic and more than one and a half million GDR citizens travel to the Federal Republic. This is understandable in view of the great numbers of people in the GDR and the FRG with relatives in the other state.

Traffic between the GDR and the FRG means traffic between two states not just with different social systems but also different financial systems, a fact which is often underestimated in your country. When it comes to trade between the GDR and the FRG one Mark is one Mark, when it comes to travelling the GDR Mark is sold for less than its true value. There are several other questions which I do not want to deal with here in detail, for example relations between your police and the secret services.

If you take all of this into account, then you cannot complain about the GDR's lack of readiness to promote traffic. Quite the opposite. The GDR has

done a lot to promote this and will certainly continue to do so. What is now important is the readiness of the FRG to overcome some of the relics of the Cold War era. You cannot express expectations on the one hand and on the other find it difficult to treat GDR citizens for what they are, namely citizens of the first socialist workers' and farmers' state on German soil. Including one or the other city into the regular border traffic agreements is a matter to be talked over.

However, the whole question revolves around the fact that more favourable travel conditions could be created if the Federal Republic of Germany would respect what already exists: the citizenship of the German Democratic Republic.

ZEIT: Don't we recognize this, Mr Chairman? During the talks at the Werbellinsee an agreement was reached between you and the then Federal Chancellor Schmidt according to which GDR citizenship was actually respected by us. Things may sometimes go wrong in procedural matters but the respect for GDR citizenship as such is no longer a problem for us.

HONECKER: That is what you say, Herr Sommer. This agreement was at that time made between myself and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and referred, for example, to the return of youngsters who somehow or other had crossed the border. We do this continually. In Federal Germany, however, these things are sorted out in the courts—because of custody decisions and so on. I have told Chancellor Kohl that we could instruct our state authorities to do the same if a ten-year old child crosses the border. I just wanted to quote this as an example.

The second question I reached an agreement with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt referred to the draft papers for the Bundeswehr sent to citizens of the GDR who temporarily stay in the Federal Republic. We continue to have difficulties in this field.

ZEIT: Has the number of these incidents not gone down?

HONECKER: No, draft papers are still being sent out. Ambassador Moldt only recently had to present our case.

Another problem are the activities of the embassies and consulates of the government of the Federal Republic of Germany in various countries. The claim of the Federal Government to be the trustee of all Germans continues

to exist and naturally violates the sovereignty of the GDR over its own citizens, that much is clear. We are still interested in finding a permanent solution to this problem.

ZEIT: There was a verdict delivered by the Federal Constitutional Court concerning this matter which is valid for the time being. The question should now be: Is it not possible to put your agreement reached with Chancellor Schmidt into some written form? It should be possible for both your and our authorities to formulate things in such a way that the key issue, that of citizenship, remains untouched. Also we are not quite clear about what you are actually demanding: In your speech in Gera the term used was "recognition", later it was "respect". Is there a difference?

HONECKER: I do not see a difference. You can respect something, you can recognize it.

Changing the Constitution is not the problem, although this could be done through a two-thirds majority. This I know for certain. The question is simply to respect the German Democratic Republic and the fact that this Republic has its own citizens. And one cannot, on the basis of a law dating back to the time of Wilhelm II, claim that citizens of the GDR are at the same time citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany, particularly since one constitutional principle stipulates that the laws of Federal Germany are valid only for the Federal Republic of Germany.

ZEIT: It is not a question of whether we recognize your citizens or not but that when GDR citizens come to the Federal Republic, within the purview of our Constitution, and want to claim our German citizenship, we do not refuse them.

HONECKER: Our stance on this question is based on international law. The problem arises from the fact that the government of the Federal Republic—including the present one in its official statements—addresses itself directly to the people of Leipzig, Dresden and so on. I could also make such appeals to the people of Bonn, Munich, etc.

Look, we did not create the Federal Republic. The Federal Republic was set up five months before the German Democratic Republic. Therefore, one must accept this state of affairs and respect that another German state came into being in the meantime. Indeed this state has been formally recognized

and therefore one must act accordingly. This means that the government of the Federal Republic is responsible for the citizens of the Federal Republic and the government of the German Democratic Republic is responsible for the citizens of the German Democratic Republic. Should the claim to be the trustee of all Germans be dropped, then this would make a big contribution to the improvement of relations between the two German states. This is the gist of the matter.

ZEIT: Regarding journeys in connection with urgent family matters you want to show generosity. Relatives once removed have already been allowed to travel–including for other reasons than those laid down. However, there is still a lack of certainty here. Does the argument about the treatment in Bonn of the President of the People's Chamber, Horst Sindermann, according to the rules of protocol have a part to play in this respect?

HONECKER: It seems to me that this point has since been sorted out. As far as I know, this visit will take place shortly–with heed taken of the fact that the President of the People's Chamber is representing the German Democratic Republic and that he should be treated accordingly. This is how I have been informed. Therefore, this is no longer an issue.

As far as visits related to urgent family matters are concerned, there has clearly been progress. There are always hindrances in a body politic. Neither we nor the Federal Republic are free from bureaucracy. However, I don't want to blame it on bureaucracy. When urgent family matters are involved, there is absolutely no problem regarding travel. Naturally, this does not stretch to the head of the secret service.

ZEIT: He perhaps does not want to.

HONECKER: That I do not know.

ZEIT: The visit of a delegation from Eisenhüttenstadt to Saarlouis, the agreement to twin the two towns and the hope of arranging exchange visits of residents of the two towns–all this has attracted a great deal of attention in our country. Do you see this as a "test case"? Will this be the start of a series of such partnerships?

HONECKER: There are many contradictory reports concerning this matter. Town-twinning is town-twinning, and an agreement will be made on the details of this partnership. The town representatives of Saarlouis and Eisenhüttenstadt must decide amongst themselves what they understand town-twinning to mean and proceed along these lines. In any case I believe that it would be sensible not to burden the twinning of the first two towns with a great campaign.

ZEIT: Can you foresee though that other partnerships would be possible with towns in the Federal Republic—and with other towns outside of the Saarland?

HONECKER: You know, what counts in these matters is that you proceed properly. I do not believe that we can solve all other problems at the same time. In this respect some accurate reports have come out of your country. These, however, are not the only reports to appear.

ZEIT: Which is the correct version, then?

HONECKER: The correct version is that we are twinning two towns in the way which is customary all over the world. Town-twinning can, of course, neither replace the government of the GDR nor the government of the Federal Republic. But it can do an awful lot as far as meeting people in the broadest sense is concerned.

ZEIT: This is the problem that plagues us more than any other. How can more of your citizens be allowed to visit our country? Why is it that routine trips of GDR citizens to the West are limited to pensioners? Why not scale down this category in age terms or abolish it altogether? Among a number of people hereabouts this raises the question: What is actually more stabilizing or destabilizing for the GDR—an open-door policy or a closed-door policy?

HONECKER: Ours is neither an open-door policy nor a closed-door policy. The issue of travel is a very complex one. It affects the fundamental relationship between the two German states. There is also no denying the fact that we have made some headway, especially as a result of the first visit of Helmut Schmidt, who was then Chancellor, to the German Democratic Repu-

blic. In a manner of speaking, the current government, a coalition of the Christian Democrat, Christian Social and Free Democrat parties, has reaped the benefits of this visit. Just think of the opening of the motorway to Hamburg, the meeting between the ministers responsible for the construction industry, the Schinkel Exhibition in Hamburg, the increased opportunities for visits concerning urgent family matters. We continued this policy after Helmut Kohl had stated that the new Federal Government would also continue this policy. And this she did.

But there are certain developments which do not reflect the spirit that once provided the basis for reaching the agreements in question. I am thinking of the marked deterioration in the relationship between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Polish People's Republic over the motto of a big expellees' rally, which read "Silesia is Ours". It is a fact of life that we are part of an alliance just as the Federal Republic is part of an alliance, and it is quite clear that we support Poland on this issue. Besides, what is the message behind "Silesia is Ours"? Situated between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany is the German Democratic Republic. Claims like these are not just unrealistic, they generate uneasiness. The motto was, in fact, abandoned very swiftly. But the matter attracted considerable attention.

With this in mind, I would like to say that many things are going very well while others are not going so well, and that efforts must be made, of course, to create an atmosphere in which cooperation between the two German states becomes something which is normal. Let me return once more to the discussion about whether the President of the People's Chamber should be allowed to come or not. The President of the People's Chamber was entertained by the President of France, the King of Spain, the President of Austria, the President of Finland, and by many others. No such questions were ever raised there. In the Federal Republic of Germany, however, the matter triggered an endless discussion.

Either the relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic develop on an equal footing, which will be good for both German states and the climate in Europe, or there will be what may be termed vacillations, in which case no one should be astonished to see various things change.

ZEIT: Speaking in Gera some years ago you demanded four things of the Federal Republic: recognition of GDR citizenship, conversion of the mutual permanent missions into embassies, fixing the Elbe border in the middle of

the river, and closing down the Records Office in Salzgitter. What urgency do you scribe to these demands today? Are these long-term objectives or are you seeking to attain them within a brief span of time?

HONECKER: All this involves basic issues of the relations between the GDR and the FRG. Whoever has a sincere interest in effective steps to normalize relations must contribute step by step to solving these basic issues. This matter is on the agenda, witness the discussion currently taking place in the FRG. A case in point is the refusal of the Federal Government to respect GDR citizenship, a subject on which I have set out my views already.

Similarly, reaching agreement on the delimitation of the frontier on the Elbe would be no problem if it were not made into one. The current practice has been in force for fourty years. Neither side would have to relinquish anything. But an agreement would have a beneficial influence on the overall climate of relations and on problems such as shipping on this important waterway and improvements in water quality.

Meanwhile increasing numbers of people in the FRG have come to look upon the so-called Records Office in Salzgitter as a relic of the Cold War, as an institution questioning the sovereignty of the GDR, as an instrument of interference in our internal affairs, therefore urging that it be abolished.

A move to convert the permanent missions into embassies would simply be a move in tune with the times.

ZEIT: Inter-German trade attained a record volume of over 15,000 million Deutsch Marks in 1985. What importance do you attach to the economic relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic?

HONECKER: According to provisonal data the trade between the GDR and the FRG attained a volume of 17,000 million marks. In other words, it has developed well, and we are in favour of expanding it for our mutual benefit. We consider it an important stabilizing factor for our relations as a whole. Solid commercial and economic ties are in our mutual interest. Therefore, both sides should do whatever is necessary to pave the way for their expansion. We are prepared to do so.

For the rest, I should like to add that the GDR is a trading partner respected worldwide, a country with a dynamic economy. This is borne out by developments in 1985 when our national income grew by 4.8 per cent, a figure regarded as remarkable by people in the know. We have brought the

Five-Year-Plan to a satisfactory conclusion, and the GDR is now preparing with tangible results in science, technology and production to meet the qualitatively new demands made on products and technologies.

ZEIT: What new things will the Party Congress in April bring the citizens of the GDR?

HONECKER: It goes without saying that the Party Congress will focus, first, on our contribution to the safeguarding of peace, second, on the ongoing dynamic development of the GDR's economy and, third, the continuation of our social programme in the period 1986–90.

These plans provide for a four to five per cent annual increase in the national income produced—I am saying four to five per cent because no decisions have been taken yet—with rising labour productivity accounting for 90 per cent of this increase. Such an annual rise in labour productivity can, of course, only by achieved by introducing new technological processes, microelectronics, opto-electronics, sensor technology, etc.

This development is attended to a certain degree by changes in the productive forces. Even now we save approximately 500 million man-hours each year. This is equivalent to a work force of rougly 300,000.

We intend to press on with this process. This means that under the 1986–90 Five-Year-Plan, which will be discussed at the 11th Party Congress, we will produce a national income of 1,300 million marks. This is a stupendous sum, a figure barely imaginable. But it is along these lines that our industry and agriculture are going to develop.

The further development of our social policy must, of course, take place within this context. The draft of this plan provides for an annual increase of four per cent in net monetary income while the prices of essential commodities, which make up about 80 per cent of the retail trade turnover, are to remain stable. As far as the remaining 20 per cent is concerned, prices will be determined by supply and demand. Of course, retail trade will also go up by four to five percent.

In addition, it is our intention, now that we have built or modernized 2.4 million homes since 1971, to build or modernize another million during the period 1986–90. In this way we hope to solve the housing problem as a question of social relevance by the year 1990, with rents remaining as low as they are at present. I am mentioning this here because I read only yesterday that rents in the Federal Republic of Germany keep soaring. In our country the

rent charged per square metre is 80 pfennigs to 1.20 marks, the latter sum probably applying in Leipziger Strasse. This is a small sum compared with what people earn.

ZEIT: How useful and how important is trade between the two German states?

HONECKER: Seventy per cent of our foreign trade is with socialist countries. Our annual turnover in trade with the Soviet Union alone comes to some 15 billion roubles. Trade with non-socialist countries accounts for 30 per cent. We want to maintain this ratio, with the volume of trade increasing of course, in absolute terms.

ZEIT: In which areas could economic cooperation be expanded?

HONECKER: There are sufficient possibilities for expanding economic cooperation. Therefore, the structure of trade is in need of improvement. Trade would also benefit if, in the FRG, certain obstacles and hindrances, which stem partly from the occupation period, could be removed.

ZEIT: Which obstacles and hindrances do you mean?

HONECKER: Firstly, the import quotas imposed on goods which we supply to the Federal Republic. Tenders are invited. There is no free trade, just import quotas: so many mineral oil products, so many consumer goods, fixed amounts of everything.

Secondly, there are no free payment transactions between the GDR and the Federal Republic. Here the Military Government Law No. 53 of 01/11/49 is applied. There are billions of credits with banks in the Federal Republic belonging to GDR citizens who are unable to get at them.

ZEIT: Can you foresee any joint ventures taking place in third countries?

HONECKER: We are in favour of developing effective forms of long-term cooperation in other countries. There are already projects in Ethiopia and Algeria, and to some extent there is good cooperation between the firms involved. This I wish to emphasize.

ZEIT: How should and can, in your opinion, the arms race in Europe and that between the two blocs generally be curbed?

HONECKER: The best thing we could do would be to sit down at the negotiating table and discuss the proposals of Mikhail Gorbachev designed to phase out all nuclear weapons by the year 2000. The three-stage plan which he presented represents a viable approach. During the first stage, according to his proposal, the USSR and the US would begin to reduce their number of nuclear arms; during the second stage, which would begin not later than 1990, the other nuclear powers would take part in the disarmament process and, finally, in the third stage up till 1999, the removal of nuclear weapons should be completed. Mutually acceptable agreements subject to strict control would guarantee that they were gone for good. This means that mankind would embark on the third millennium without nuclear weapons.

First of all, it is very urgent to stop the spiralling arms race. In particular, this could be achieved by banning the testing of nuclear weapons since this would mean that the qualitative further development of nuclear weapons would be frozen. That would be a start. The rest can only proceed when the first step has been taken. The Soviet Union has practically already taken this first step with its unilateral moratorium on nuclear explosions, which has been extended to 31 March 1986. We can only hope that the US will follow suit.

Other possibilities for scaling down military confrontation and for reducing armed forces and armaments are offered by the Stockholm Conference and the Vienna Talks. Mikhail Gorbachev's programme provides extensive proposals on this, which also take up Western considerations.

The new Soviet proposals have met with a lively response amongst world public opinion. Just a few days ago the Palme Commission on Disarmament and Security Matters, at its session in Delhi, described the three-stage plan of Mikhail Gorbachev as far-reaching and constructive. Great attention ought to be paid to the document. It approved of a rapid agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States on the prohibition of nuclear weapons tests and also, to facilitate negotiation on this, on a joint and verifiable moratorium on nuclear explosions. In addition, the Commission spoke out in favour of a treaty between the Soviet Union and the United States banning the research, development and deployment of space weapons and weapons which threaten objects in space.

This commission includes many eminent figures from 17 countries whose expertise and judgement carry a great deal of weight. I will only name here the SPD politician Egon Bahr, the Soviet scientist Georgi Arbatov, former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, the Chairman of the Dutch Labour Party, Joop den Uyl, and the former Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland. In the nuclear age, so the commission stressed, there is no reasonable alternative to cooperation and negotiation. One must abandon the idea of striving for military supremacy. With this we are totally in agreement.

Nowadays, every state, large or small, and all political forces are called upon to reflect and make their efforts to resolve the current dangerous situation. Some ideas which were dismissed before should be reconsidered and new things should be tried out in order to solve the problems in the interests of everyone. Instead of destroying ourselves in a nuclear war we should learn to live together. But not only this. We should learn also to get on well with each other.

ZEIT: You are advocating a chemical-weapon-free zone in Europe as well as a nuclear-weapon-free zone as proposed by Olof Palme. What facilities for inspection and verification would you be prepared to grant in this context?

HONECKER: Whoever wants to disarm must be prepared to accept verification. Both Mikhail Gorbachev's programme and our proposal for the establishment of a chemical-weapon-free zone in Europe envisage verification right to the point of-site inspections. We will accept whatever is necessary to ensure compliance with treaty obligations towards disarmament. Needless to say, the mode and extent of verification depend on the purpose of the treaty. We will allow the same kind of inspections on our territory that the other parties to a treaty are prepared to accept. This is another case where the principle of equality and equal security must apply. The Federal Government could explore our general willingness in detail if it took up the proposal of the GDR and Czechoslovakia to enter into negotiations on a zone free of chemical weapons.

ZEIT: Is your willingness to go along with "on site" inspections an indication of a fundamentally new attitude?

HONECKER: We have moved closer to the Western proposals in this area, for the issue of verification has always played a major role. The Soviet Union has taken up the Western proposal that on-site inspections should be carried out to verify whether a nuclear test has taken place. As regards the subject of a chemical-weapon-free zone, we have also proposed on-site verification to establish whether a factory manufactures chemical weapons, whether chemical weapons are destroyed and so on. This would be a big step forward. So our position has changed somewhat here. We have sought to accomodate the Western poposals with a view to opening up the chance of progress at the ongoing negotiations, whether this be in Vienna, Stockholm or Geneva.

ZEIT: What do you hope to gain from negotiations between the SED and the SPD on these matters? Should you not address your initiatives to the Federal Government?

HONECKER: I should like to remind you that three years ago the GDR submitted a proposal to your government suggesting that negotiations should be commenced to establish a corridor free of battlefield nuclear weapons on the basis of Swedish considerations. However, those to whom the proposal was addressed declared that there was no point in discussing this. I emphasized at the time that the proposal still stands. Now as before we hold that the Swedish proposal for a corridor deserves to be considered and put into effect. This would be in the interests of both German states, and of other states as well, and it would mark an important step towards confidence-building and arms limitation.

If the government of the Federal Republic responds unfavourably, it is hardly surprising that other political forces take up this matter. We are conducting our talks with the SPD in an effort—as in the case of chemical-weapon-free zones—to find common ground on which solutions could be based, to impart political momentum to official negotiations and, ultimately, to bring about agreements on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

ZEIT: The two German states suffer more than any other from what has been variously described as counter-deployment and counter-counter-deployment. What can they do, either individually or jointly, in order to induce the two major powers, the US and the USSR, to dismantle nuclear intermediate-range weapons on their territory?

HONECKER: Basically, it is all European peoples who suffer from the development set in motion by the Brussels missile deployment decision. Nor has the United States gained anything from it because in today's world it is true of all states that more weapons mean not more, but less security. This view is shared by the Soviet leadership. Hence there is no need to convince them of the need to end the arms race on earth and to prevent one in space.

This also goes for the dismantling of the tactical missiles emplaced in the GDR as a countermeasure against the deployment of US intermediate-range missiles in Western Europe. The understanding is that these will be removed if the reasons for their deployment no longer exist. In other words: If the Federal Republic were to induce the US to dismantle its intermediate-range missiles, the corresponding missiles on our territory would also be dismantled. I should like to recall that the Soviet Union, right in the first stage of its disarmament programme, envisages a decision on the complete elimination of Soviet and US medium-range missiles in the European zone, both ballistic and cruise, as a first step towards ridding our continent of nuclear weapons.

At any rate both German states should urge that valid treaties on arms limitation are adhered to and, as far as they are concerned, abstain from anything that might give a new twist to the arms spiral.

ZEIT: If the United States and the Soviet Union reach agreement on a "zero option" in the area of intermediate-range weapons, will the missiles emplaced on your territory after the counter-deployments got under way be withdrawn?

HONECKER: They will disappear.

ZEIT: So not just the SS-20 missiles would disappear, but also the shorter-range missiles deployed in the GDR?

HONECKER: They would disappear if the reasons for their deployment ceased to exist.

ZEIT: In other words, the dismantling of these weapons could be added to the offer made by Gorbachev, which makes no mention of them?

HONECKER: Yes, indeed.

ZEIT: You have repeatedly referred to the dangers arising from American SDI research and the involvement of West German firms in it. But the Soviets are conducting similar research. What are the grounds for your opposition to the space projects of the Americans? Are you fearful that NATO's concept of defence might be altered?

HONECKER: The allegation that the Soviet Union is conducting similar research is clearly designed to produce an excuse for the US Star Wars programme. If you take the Soviet proposals at their face-value you will conclude that not only the Federal Germans, but the whole human race will fare best if disarmament on Earth gets under way and if the arms race is not extended to outer space.

SDI is adding a cosmic dimension to the danger of a nuclear holocaust, which is looming large even now, ultimately provoking an arms race in all directions. Incidentally, we are not the only ones to view the situation this way. Many former presidents, defence secretaries and other eminent US figures, notably scientists, have issued dire warnings and clearly stated their opposition. In the FRG, too, opinion polls reveal that the majority of Federal Germans are against involvement in these insane armaments schemes whose instigators are engaged in a quixotic quest for superiority, thus pushing the world ever closer to be brink of a nuclear Armageddon.

Even now the US insistence on its space arms programme is obstructing progress on disarmament talks. On the other hand, the arms race is being escalated, with weapons stockpiles continuing to grow. I have said before, greater security cannot be achieved this way. On the contrary. The world is becoming more erratic. Negative implications for economic, scientific and technological cooperation between East and West are already discernible. Just imagine how much worse the situation will be if the ominous march of events cannot be halted.

We hope that we have not yet heard the last about whether such a development should be aided and abetted. No signature has yet been affixed to a document committing the Federal Republic to participation in the US Star Wars programme.

Naturally, we are viewing with concern that certain NATO quarters are supporting the dangerous line taken by the United States and that efforts are being made to accumulate new weapons stockpiles under the guise of defence. Even so we hope that more and more realistically-minded forces op-

pose this madness. It will remain the object of our endeavours to ensure that common sense and realism gain the upper hand.

ZEIT: You are warning the Federal Government – or who else?–against drawing the Federal Republic into the Star Wars programme of the US. Does this also refer to a case of, say some firms taking part in two dozen research contracts worth 2.5 to 25 million dollars over a period of six years? After all, this would not mean participation of the Federal Government in some Star Wars programme, but an attempt to join a technological adventure which may yield some valuable information.

HONECKER: I pointed out to Chancellor Kohl at an early stage that any participation by the Federal Republic in SDI would not ease but rather exacerbate tensions in the world. We have no objections to research for peaceful purposes. We have invited the Federal Republic to play a more active part in research for peaceful ends rather than in the SDI programme. As a matter of fact, the SDI programme was first proclaimed as a Star Wars programme by Mr Reagan, no less. Initially, it was designed to wipe out the "evil empire", in other words the Soviet Union. Then it was meant to conduct a "decapitation strike". Later it was renamed "Strategic Defence Initiative". But this is mere eyewish as it involves gambling on a first strike which would have deadly consequences for all mankind. As it is, the United States has refused up to this day to give an undertaking that it will not be the first to employ nuclear weapons.

As regards the firms you mentioned, we know very well that there are multinational companies, that various firms are doing research in a number of areas. What matters is the purpose of their research. Is their research geared to peaceful pursuits or to warlike designs? And why, for example, should it be necessary to take part in war preparations in America if there are opportunities to conduct research for peaceful purposes under the Eureka programme or through cooperation with Intercosmos? We are taking part in space research, including laser research and we have a potential of our own in this field.

ZEIT: As we see it, this is not participation in preparation for a war, but if anything participation in research designed to ward off a war. But generally speaking, we appreciate that you were extremely alarmed at the de-

ployment of new intermediate-range weapons in Western Europe, specifically in the Federal Republic.

HONECKER: Primarily because afterwards we had nuclear weapons on our territory for the first time.

ZEIT: Participating in SDI, after all, is quite a different matter. When seven companies take part in some sort of laboratory tests it does not alter the balance.

HONECKER: We are against any attempt to prepare the ground for the so-called Star Wars scenario. Why? The main point in the entire Soviet-American communiqué is disarmament. It would be much more reasonable at this moment in time to start negotiations and then decide about the participation or non-participation of the Federal Government, that is to bring to bear the authority of the Federal Republic—and the authority of the GDR as well—on results to be achieved in the negotiations and then to take decisions afterwards, not to jump in at the deep end without any idea how one is going to get out.

ZEIT: Would you want to ban West German companies participating in SDI research from trade between the Federal Republic and the GDR.

HONECKER: We are realistic. Research is going on in many different labs, and multinational corporations are particularly heavily engaged in research. As far as these corporations are concerned let me quote a few examples: I received a delegation of metal workers from Saarlouis. In Saarlouis a Ford model is being produced, an American car. We wanted to buy 10,000 of them there. This turned out to be impossible since the sales department of that firm is in Cologne, not in Saarlouis. We informed the works committee about that. This means: Under present economic conditions in the FRG it is impossible to decide what is German and what is American capital. The question therefore, in my opinion, is of secondary importance.

What is important is the attitude of the Federal Government vis-a-vis the SDI programme. At present the Federal Government is among a few others that are in favour of SDI while the majority of Western European states, including NATO countries, refuse the SDI programme or are at least restrain-

ing themselves until the negotiations between the USA and the Soviet Union held in Geneva have come to fruition.

In my letter which I sent to Chancellor Kohl last year you will find no threats but just one comment that we will do nothing to make the situation more tense but will, on the contrary, promote everything which helps to reduce confrontation right down to cooperation. This seems to be the most important thing for us to do.

ZEIT: When reading your biography one notices how much you longed for an antifascist united front in your youth. That united front was directed against fascism. Since today the issue is a nuclear war, one wonders whether you still have this dream. The unity of action which you sought to establish at that time included not only communists, socialists and social-democrats but also Christians. Are Christians in the GDR allies in the struggle for peace?

HONECKER: On all accounts, and not only those in the GDR but indeed throughout the world. When you said longing, yes really, for me reason is coupled here with feelings. According to Kalinin one has to be enthusiastic about something, not only convinced of it, enthusiasm is needed.

In the struggle for the maintenance of peace we favour a coalition of common sense and realism.

ZEIT: "Dissolution of the blocs" was your slogan once. Do you consider such a dissolution of the military blocs realistic, or at least that they should be set further apart as proposed thirty years ago by the Pole Rapacki and the American Kennan?

HONECKER: The Warsaw Treaty contains a clause about its dissolution in the case of the establishment of an all-European system of collective security. As you know, this Treaty was prolonged last year without any amendments. We continue to consider the simultaneous dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty and NATO, or rather as a first measure, that of their military organizations, possible. At the same time we are ready to take small steps. One contribution could be to set up zones free of chemical and nuclear weapons. What is decisive is the political will to make progress in this direction. Based on the recognition of equality and equal security no question should be insoluble.

ZEIT: You were born in the West of Germany, at a time when the country was not divided. A year ago you appealed to Chancellor Kohl in a letter "on behalf of the German people". What are your associations when you speak of the "German people", when you hear the word "Germany" or use the term "nation"?

HONECKER: Certainly, my associations are somewhat different from those of your sports commentators. When you have a look around here it is easy to see that we put great emphasis on an awareness of history. This, however, is fundamentally different from that of the times of the Kaiser or the Weimar Republic. In the past, history lessons mainly meant learning certain dates off by heart. History was subdivided into periods covering the years from one war to the next. We see this differently and some of your people are irritated by this, which is totally unnecessary. We not only have a Museum of German History. Our historians are also working on the history of the German people and making new findings. Nobody can ignore the realities of the existence of two states on German soil, the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. All the rest follows from that.

ZEIT: The GDR has re-discovered German history, beyond the history of the German revolutionary movement. The equestrian statue of the Prussian king Frederick II. is back on Unter den Linden, in Luther Year the reformer was commemorated in grand style, a new biography portrays, in a fascinating and objective manner, Otto von Bismarck. Why, then, do you rule out any cooperation between the two parts of Berlin in preparing the 750th anniversary of the city's foundation?

HONECKER: Cross out the word "re-discovered". You cannot put the blame to the GDR if some of your media lack historic consciousness. In 1945 and the years afterwards the first tasks which had to be solved were to shake off the burden of the material and ideological legacy of fascism, the consistent settling of accounts with the sinister past and its representatives, exemplified for example by the expropriation of Nazi and war criminals, as well as democratic reconstruction. In the course of this we were relying on the revolutionary, progressive traditions of the German people, at the same time making clear our stance towards the whole of our historical heritage. Reference to this can be found in the Appeal of the Central Committee of the

Communist Party of Germany published on 11 June 1945 and the Appeal of the Central Executive of the Socialdemocratic Party of Germany which was issued on 15 June 1945 in support of it.

That we rule out any cooperation in preparing the 750th anniversary of Berlin's foundation is new to me. If you look around here in the centre of Berlin you will see that, as a result of talks between the GDR government and the responsible authorities of West Berlin, the statues belonging to the former Schlossbrücke were put back in their original place. In response, the GDR government handed over to the West Berlin authorities the Archive of the Royal Prussian Porcellain Factory because it used to be situated in that part of the city.

At present new efforts are being made to return to each other items which used to be on the territory of either the capital of the GDR or West Berlin. However, no agreement has yet been reached as far as those treasures of our National Gallery are concerned which, without any legal justification, were added to the so-called Prussian Cultural Property Foundation. We would be happy, if these paintings and sculptures were returned on the occasion of the 750th anniversary so that we can put them back where they belong. As you see, things are not always what they appear to be.

As you know, a representative committee for preparing the ceremonies on the occasion of the 750th anniversary of the city's foundation has been set up of which I am the Chairman. A group of our historians drew up theses for the 750th anniversary which have been published. All this shows that we are able to appreciate the history of Berlin as it is.

Of course, the permanent residents of West Berlin will have the opportunity to come to the capital of the GDR on the occasion of the 750th anniversary and take part in various events or visit exhibitions. Berlin will be open to visitors from all over the world.

This, however, does not entitle us to take the 750th anniversary celebration to be an occasion to close our eyes to the realities, as they have developed throughout history and exist today. There is Berlin, capital of the GDR, there is West Berlin, and there is the settlement of various issues in connection with the Quadripartite Agreement on West Berlin of 3 September 1971. In this respect we must not forget that West Berlin, in contrast to the capital of the GDR, is subject to an occupation statute.

ZEIT: Lately there have been many discussions in the Federal Republic on "keeping the German question open". What is your opinion on this?

HONECKER: I consider this discussion to be superfluous. If you take an unbiased approach to this problem, I rather believe that it is indeed a piece of luck for humanity that there are two German states. Pan-German ideas have always been a tragedy for the peoples in Europe and elsewhere.

ZEIT: Do you give German unity a chance in future history? Is this the final aim towards which you are working under socialist conditions? Or do you consider it to be the inevitable fate of our homeland to be divided?

HONECKER: Your question is ambiguous. You know pretty well that we demanded a united democratic state in 1945 and later. This could not prevent, however, that in violation of the Potsdam Agreement the Western allies set up the Federal Republic of Germany in May 1949. Five months later the German Democratic Republic was founded. At that time the course was set for the future. Today, the existence of two German states is a decisive element of stability in Europe and with regards to the international balance of power. Whoever tries to alter this endangers peace.

ZEIT: Is a peace treaty for the Germans still a desirable aim in your opinion? Could it finally settle the border issues?

HONECKER: I think no honest politician in the East or West considers a peace treaty a serious issue. As you know, the Soviet Union tabled more than just one proposal for a peace treaty in the 1950s. The then government of the FRG and the three western powers rejected these proposals which some today consider as a wasted opportunity. Time has long since passed over this problem.

What is a peace treaty supposed to settle? All the important things are settled already. Meanwhile we have the system of European treaties, including the Quadripartite Agreement on West Berlin. This system of treaties is a fundamental element of security and peace in Europe. The Helsinki Final Act has underwritten the territorial status quo on a multilateral basis. This provided for binding and durable legal stipulations and norms of behaviour. Since then border issues have been resolved once for all, irrespective of the fact that the German Reich within its borders of 1937 perished in the flames of World War II. To speak still of the necessity for a peace treaty means ignoring realities and indulging in Pan-German dreams.

PANORAMA DDR – Auslandspresseagentur GmbH
GDR – 1054 Berlin, Wilhelm Pieck Strasse 49
Translated by Intertext
Verlag Zeit im Bild
GDR – 8012 Dresden, Julian Grimau Allee
Printed In the German Democratic Republic
by Grafischer Grossbetrieb Völkerfreundschaft Dresden
6255-2